

Federal Highway Administration, DOT

§ 774.3

AUTHORITY: 23 U.S.C. 103(c), 109(h), 138, 325, 326, 327 and 204(h)(2); 49 U.S.C. 303; Section 6009 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Pub. L. 109-59, Aug. 10, 2005, 119 Stat. 1144); 49 CFR 1.48 and 1.51.

SOURCE: 73 FR 13395, Mar. 12, 2008, unless otherwise noted.

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 73 FR 13395, Mar. 12, 2008, part 774 was added, effective Apr. 11, 2008.

§ 774.1 Purpose.

The purpose of this part is to implement 23 U.S.C. 138 and 49 U.S.C. 303, which were originally enacted as Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and are still commonly referred to as "Section 4(f)."

§ 774.3 Section 4(f) approvals.

The Administration may not approve the use, as defined in § 774.17, of Section 4(f) property unless a determination is made under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section.

(a) The Administration determines that:

(1) There is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, as defined in § 774.17, to the use of land from the property; and

(2) The action includes all possible planning, as defined in § 774.17, to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use; or

(b) The Administration determines that the use of the property, including any measure(s) to minimize harm (such as any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures) committed to by the applicant, will have a *de minimis* impact, as defined in § 774.17, on the property.

(c) If the analysis in paragraph (a)(1) of this section concludes that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, then the Administration may approve only the alternative that:

(1) Causes the least overall harm in light of the statute's preservation purpose. The least overall harm is determined by balancing the following factors:

(i) The ability to mitigate adverse impacts to each Section 4(f) property (including any measures that result in benefits to the property);

(ii) The relative severity of the remaining harm, after mitigation, to the protected activities, attributes, or features that qualify each Section 4(f) property for protection;

(iii) The relative significance of each Section 4(f) property;

(iv) The views of the official(s) with jurisdiction over each Section 4(f) property;

(v) The degree to which each alternative meets the purpose and need for the project;

(vi) After reasonable mitigation, the magnitude of any adverse impacts to resources not protected by Section 4(f); and

(vii) Substantial differences in costs among the alternatives.

(2) The alternative selected must include all possible planning, as defined in § 774.17, to minimize harm to Section 4(f) property.

(d) Programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations are a time-saving procedural alternative to preparing individual Section 4(f) evaluations under paragraph (a) of this section for certain minor uses of Section 4(f) property. Programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations are developed by the Administration based on experience with a specific set of conditions that includes project type, degree of use and impact, and evaluation of avoidance alternatives.¹ An approved programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation may be relied upon to cover a particular project only if the specific conditions in the programmatic evaluation are met

¹FHWA has issued five programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations: (1) Final Nationwide Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Determination for Federal-Aid Transportation Projects That Have a Net Benefit to a Section 4(f) Property; (2) Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluations and Approvals for Federally-Aided Highway Projects With Minor Involvement With Public Parks, Recreation Lands, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Historic Sites; (3) Final Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for Federally-Aided Highway Projects With Minor Involvements With Historic Sites; (4) Historic Bridges; Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval; and (5) Section 4(f) Statement and Determination for Independent Bikeway or Walkway Construction Projects.